MERKS Reform Commission: Operations and Management

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Abstract

Through the efficient and effective use of Standard four and Standard seven, the management and operations of the MERKS Reform Commission will be able to move toward their vision of Success through Learning. The management and operations function will focus on research-based approaches to financial management, student and staff selection, transportation and program evaluation. The goal is to make decisions and build processes which will help the district move toward the established vision for instruction and learning.

An effective leader must have the managerial skills to be able to understand school finance, specifically the five key areas related to the school budget. These areas align with indicator five of understanding school finance as describe by (Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, & Glass, 2005). A school leader needs to, “exhibit an understanding of school financial including data management, budget creation, budget management, legal aspects of managing resources, and problem solving” (p. 96).

According to Pearson (1987), the initial cost of “establishing magnet schools usually requires an outlay of capital beyond what is considered for other schools of a district” (p. 5). Pearson also reports (1987), “although there is a costly start-up cost, the average per pupil cost after the start-up phase is not a great deal higher than overall district averages” (p. 6).

To utilize the five key areas of indicator five operations management, the recommendation would be to develop a plan to phase-in the use of magnet schools to offset the initial impact of creating a magnet school at each location in one year. The commission could also investigate the option of a grade level phase-in starting with grade three at each location and adding a new grade level each year. This would allow the students who start in magnet programs in grade three to continue in magnet themes, as the program expands as they move through the next two grade levels.

An effective leader must have the managerial skills to be able to recruit, select, develop and maintain qualified and motivated personnel. These skills align with indicator number one for human resources management. The three areas this research will focus on include the staffing process for administrators, teachers and volunteers.

According to the U.S. Department of Education Office of Innovation and Improvement (2004), the success of a magnet school, “depends to a great extent on choosing the right principal for each school” (p. 9). The key characteristics a successful principal demonstrates include; passion, commitment, the ability to build buy-in, the ability to cultivate collaboration and the knowledge of how to reach out to the community. Many parents make the decision on which magnet school to attend based on the theme and the principal.

The selection of staff is also a critical decision in the process of establishing magnet schools. Bryant (1987) believes it is very important for the selected staff to, “add to the strength of the magnet programs through interest, experience or training, commitment and willingness to spend extra time with students” (p. 9). The recommendation for the selection of teachers would be through an application process, to make sure they are a good match for the school’s theme and philosophy. To be able to develop the application process, the leader needs to make sure the required policies are established, and the collective bargaining agreement, is written to allow for this process to occur. The leader would need to have an in-depth understanding of indicator three under human resources. This indicator allows the leader to avoid legal problems involving personnel decisions.

A frequently forgotten group of human resources includes volunteers and community agencies, which can support the magnet school model. The U. S. Department of Education Office of Innovation and Improvement (2004) believes, “more than any other kind of school, a magnet school depends on community participation for thematic expertise, for facilities, and, not least, for donations of equipment and funds” (p. 28). It is the leader’s responsibility to make sure the marketing, communication and relationships are present to benefit from the expertise of the volunteers and local agencies. Another managerial consideration is to make sure the policies and procedures are in place to allow for volunteers to work in the school environment with students. This would include a process for identifying credentials and the security component of volunteers spending time in the school.